

Doctrine of God Part 31- The Son of God and Salvation Part 2

The Son's Present Work

Previously, we considered four aspects of the Son's work of salvation which He accomplished during His time on earth. However, it is important to understand that His work on our behalf did not end when He ascended into heaven. In this chapter, we will consider two ways in which the Son is still actively involved in the salvation of His people: the Son gives life to His people, and He intercedes for His people.

THE SON GIVES LIFE TO HIS PEOPLE

The life that the Son gives to His people is not confined or limited to the resurrection. He is the source of both our physical resurrection at the end of the ages and our spiritual life and strength in our daily lives now.

1. In John 14:6, Jesus makes a remarkable statement about Himself. Note what this confirms to us about His person and the believer's dependence upon Him...

6 Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

If Christ is not God, then this statement is blasphemous. Christ is not only the embodiment of God's truth and the way of reconciliation but also the source of all life—physical and spiritual.

2. In John 15:1-8, Jesus makes a similarly remarkable statement regarding His person and the believer's relationship to Him.... "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. **3** You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. **5** I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. **7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

a. *Note how Jesus refers to Himself in verse 1 and what this tells us about Him as the source of the believer's life... "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

b. *According to verses 4-5, note the dependence of the believer upon Christ as the source of all spiritual life... **4** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. **5** I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

NOTES: The analogy is as powerful as it is beautiful. A branch can only bear fruit if it is connected to the life-giving vine. Once it is cut off, it withers and becomes fruitless. In a strikingly similar fashion, the believer can only possess spiritual life and bear fruit through his or her on-going relationship with Christ, learning and obeying His Word and relying upon His power.

To conclude this section, consider Paul's confident assertion in Philippians 4:13. Note what this text teaches us about Christ as the source of the believer's life and strength and how we should we live in light of this truth... **13** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

NOTES: The word “strengthens” comes from the Greek word **endunamóo**, which can also be translated, “empowers.” It is a present participle, which indicates continuous action. Christ continually gives life and strengthens His people.

THE SON INTERCEDES FOR HIS PEOPLE

Having ascended to the right hand of God, Christ acts as the Advocate for His people, and He lives forever to make intercession before the throne of God on their behalf. Christ’s continuous inter-cession for His people does not mean that He is on His knees before the throne of God begging for mercy on our behalf. Rather, He intercedes as One seated at the very right hand of God, as One who is omniscient and knows every need of His people, as One who has all authority to speak on their behalf, and as One who annuls every accusation against them.

1. I John 2:1-2 is one of the most important texts in all of Scripture regarding the Son’s work as our Advocate...My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; **2** and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*.

NOTES: The fact that we have an Advocate before the Father should not make us apathetic about holiness or careless about sin. On the contrary, it should motivate us to obedience because of the great work the Son has accomplished for us. However, the most mature Christian is still subject to moral weakness and sin. Therefore, it is our great consolation that we have an Advocate with the Father. The word “advocate” comes from the Greek word **parákletos**, which denotes a “helper” or one who is called to speak on another’s behalf. The word “propitiation” comes from the Greek word **hilasmos**, which means, “appeasement” or “satisfaction.” It refers to a sacrifice given to appease an offended party. The Son is the propitiation for our sins in that He offered His life

in our place as a sacrifice for our sin. His sacrifice satisfied the demands of God's justice against us and appeased His wrath. He can be our Advocate and Defender because He Himself has paid for our sins.

2. In Romans 8:33-34, we find another important text regarding the Son's intercessory ministry. Note what these verses say is the result of His saving work and intercession...**33** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; **34** who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

NOTES: The questions, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" and "Who is the one who condemns?" are one and the same. It is as though God were issuing a challenge to every being in the universe, including Satan himself. The reason why no charge or condemnation can be brought against God's people is two-fold. (1) God has justified His people or given them a perfect legal standing before Him. This was accomplished through the perfect life that the Son lived and the death that He died on behalf of His people. (2) The Son now sits at the right hand of God as His people's Intercessor and Defender.

In Hebrews 7:23-25, the Scriptures describe not only the power and efficacy of the Son's intercessory ministry but also its permanence. Summarize the text in your own words...**23** The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, **24** but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. **25** Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

NOTES: This text leaves little to be explained. By the power of Christ's endless life, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him.

4. Although the Scriptures do not reveal the exact nature of the Son's heavenly intercession before the throne of God, some clues may be found in His "High Priestly Prayer," which He prayed on behalf of His disciples during His earthly ministry (John 17:1-26). Below is a list of the petitions that Christ made for His people in that prayer...

John 17:11-12...**11** I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as *We are*. **12** While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. (*Christ intercedes for the perseverance of His people*)

John 17:13...**13** But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. (*Christ intercedes for the joy of His people*)

John 17:15...**15** I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. (*Christ intercedes for the protection of His people from all satanic forces ...see also Luke 22:32*)

John 17:17-19...**17** Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. **18** As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. **19** For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. (*Christ intercedes for the sanctification of His people*)

John 17:21-23...**21** that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.**22** The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; **23** I in them and You in Me, that they may be

perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. (*Christ intercedes for the unity of His people*)

John 17:24...**24** Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world (*Christ intercedes for the future glorification of His people*)

“But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (v. 32).

Luke 22:31–34

One of the most famous backsliders in the history of the church is Simon Peter. This man, who had followed Jesus faithfully in the midst of hunger, storm, and public unrest, denied Him when He made that final journey to the cross. He publicly and boldly denied that he ever had known Jesus of Nazareth. Could such a man, who had turned His back on his Savior, his Lord, his friend, ever again be confident that he would one day enter into that inheritance promised by God?

We can, of course, easily answer the question because we have a record of Jesus forgiving Peter of his sin and restoring him. But what if we did not have that scene recorded at the end of John’s gospel? What if we had no way of knowing for sure that Peter had been forgiven, only that he had continued in the ministry after Jesus had ascended into heaven? Could we, then, know for certain that Peter was restored? It might surprise you that we could.

In Luke 22:31–34, we have a record of Jesus’ prediction concerning Peter’s denial. Jesus said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” A time would come when Satan would sift Peter, and he would fall under the weight of temptation and deny his Lord. But what did Jesus say about that time? He comforted Peter by assuring him that he would not lose his faith. And the reason his faith wouldn’t fail was that Jesus had prayed for him.

Peter would not fall away from the faith because Jesus had interceded for him. What an amazing thing! And it is even more amazing to consider that He prays for each and every Christian alive today. If you are a Christian, Jesus is praying for you. He is praying that your faith will not fail, no matter how far you fall. Though Jesus' work of sacrificial atonement was finished on the cross, His work of redemption did not stop there. He was raised for our justification and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God to intercede for us. We can be confident of our salvation because of Jesus' promise, "I will pray for you." We have a living hope and a living Savior, one who is praying every day at the throne of God that our faith will not fail.

This promise of Christ's intercession does not belong just to Peter, but to all whom He died for. All those who have found forgiveness in Him have the assurance of His intercession.

From Ligonier Ministries

The Work of Christ's Intercession Considered (Excerpts)

BY WILHELMUS A BRAKEL

Intercessory prayer is the second element of Christ's priestly office, of which we read, "Who also maketh intercession for us," (Romans 8:34); "He ever liveth to make intercession for them," (Hebrews 7:25); ".to appear in the presence of God for us," (Hebrews 9:24); "We have an advocate with the Father," (1 John 2:1). Concerning His intercession, we must consider its necessity, nature, and efficacy.

WE WILL FIRST CONSIDER ITS NECESSITY.

Intercession is a task that belongs to Christ's high-priestly office: "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," (Hebrews 8:1). As High Priest, He is in heaven; as High Priest, He sits at the right hand of God. The task in which He engages Himself as High Priest is to appear before His Father on behalf of His elect, interceding for them.

It is thus a task of Christ's high-priestly office to intercede. The matters for which He intercedes there are these:

(1) All that which His elect are in need of in this life in order to enable them to walk in the way to heaven—namely, the Holy Spirit Who illumines, comforts, and sanctifies them. This we observe in John 14:16-17: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth."

(2) He intercedes for them so that they may perfectly possess salvation after this life. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am," (John 17:24). This is also confirmed in Hebrews 7:25: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." For men to be saved, it was not sufficient that by His suffering, death, and holiness He merited salvation; but it is also necessary that by means of His intercession He would apply salvation and make them actual partakers of it. This was typified in the Old Testament by the high priest, who was not finished after offering the sacrifice, but had to enter the Holy of Holies with blood in order to sprinkle it upon the mercy seat and burn incense. The Lord Jesus, being the antitype, likewise had to enter in with His own blood (Lev 16; Heb 9:12). This prerequisite was of such necessity that without it He could not be a high priest. "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest," (Hebrews 8:4). Had He not been a priest, there would be no salvation for the elect, for they must come to God and be saved by way of a priest. For this reason, sacrifice and prayer are joined together. "It is Christ that died...who also maketh intercession for us," (Romans 8:34); "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins," (1 John 2:1-2).

THE SECOND THING THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO INTERCESSION IS THE MANNER IN WHICH HE PRAYS.

First, even as Christ executed the first element of His high-priestly office as Surety, that is, the sacrifice of His body, He likewise administers the second element of His office, that is, intercession, as Surety.

He does not merely stand before the throne as a friend who speaks well on behalf of His people but stands there as Surety, Who has taken upon Himself to fully execute the salvation of His own. This is evident from Hebrews 7:22-25. In verse 22, the apostle expressly calls Him "surety." He also speaks of Him as such in the subsequent verses: "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" and "ever liveth to make intercession for them," (Hebrews 7:24-25). Furthermore, since He executed the first aspect of His priestly office as God and man, the efficacy of His sacrifice being derived from His divine nature—from the divine Person—Christ must likewise be viewed as God and man in the second element of His priestly ministry. That the efficacy of His intercession is also derived from His Person, that is, from His divine nature, is demonstrated by the apostle in Hebrews 4:14, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He is great, for He, being the Son of God, is equal to the Father. That is the critical point, and it is that which yields comfort and boldness.

Secondly, one must not think that Christ falls upon His knees there and prays with strong crying and tears (Hebrews 5:7). No, that was His engagement in His humiliation. His intercession, however, consists in His appearance in the sanctuary before the countenance of His Father with His blood, "that speaketh better things than that of Abel," (Hebrews 12:24). It consists in the demonstration of the efficacy of His suffering and death.

Thirdly, it consists in His efficacious will whereby, on the basis of the covenant, He demands the fulfillment of all the promises for His elect both in this life (John 17:15-17) and in the life to come. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am," (John 17:24). The Father gives Him license to make such demands by saying, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," (Psalm 2:8). The Father has promised Him this. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand," (Isaiah 53:10). This the Son demands.

Fourthly, His intercession consists in advocating and pleading the cause of His elect against all accusations made against them. The Apostle John therefore calls Him an Advocate (1 John 2:1). This is confirmed by the apostle who says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ...who also maketh intercession for us," (Romans 8:33-34). Since He is able to demonstrate that He has fully paid for each and every sin and has fulfilled the Law on their behalf by placing Himself under and being obedient to the Law, He concludes that there is no condemnation for His elect, but that they have a right to eternal felicity.

Fifthly, it consists in presenting the prayers of His children that, through the Spirit of grace and supplication, have been offered in His name. Since they have been offered in His name, His merits must have such efficacy that their prayers are heard.

THE THIRD MATTER THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO INTERCESSION IS ITS EFFICACY.

Such is evident for three reasons:

First, there is the righteousness of the cause. Here, neither favoritism comes into play, nor is there a looking the other way, nor does Christ merely make a request. Rather, the matter that Christ pleads as Advocate is entirely just and is confirmed by superlative documentation. He appears on behalf of His elect with His paid ransom, which is so perfect that not one penny is lacking: ".he had by himself purged our sins," (Hebrews 1:3); "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us," (Hebrews 9:12). He has so completely fulfilled the Law on behalf of the elect that they are "the righteousness of God in him," (2 Cor. 5:21). The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us (Romans 8:4). This He demonstrates to His Father, and therefore this can only be followed by actual justification and the bestowal of the right to possess eternal felicity.

Secondly, the efficacy of His intercession is also evident from the relationship between God and the elect, which is as between a father and his children.

The Lord Jesus prays for those whom the Father has loved with an everlasting love, accepted as His children, designated to be the objects of His grace and benevolence, and towards whom His heart is tenderly inclined. The Father is therefore desirous that someone would speak to Him on their behalf. How can this Advocate then possibly be rejected?

Thirdly, this efficacy is also evident from the Person Himself Who is the Advocate. He is the great High Priest (cf. Hebrews 4:14; 10:21). He is great in His Person, being coessential with the Father, and great is the friendship between Him and His Father. "For the Father loveth the Son," (John 5:20). With full acquiescence and total delight He has become Surety. By an oath, He has been consecrated to His priestly office and has been obedient to His Father in all things, even unto the death upon the cross. The Father Himself says to Him, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee," (Psalm 2:8). How can such an Intercessor possibly be rejected? Now consider all of these things together. As such a High Priest—the very Son of God Who as the one party in the covenant of redemption has submitted Himself willingly and obediently to everything—He represents the most righteous cause, which He can confirm by way of His passion and death and prove from His obedience to the Law. With all of this He pleads the cause of His elect, doing so before a gracious and benevolent Father on behalf of His beloved children and heirs. For these reasons, His intercession is efficacious to the superlative degree. It is thus most certain that it will prevail and the matter be given to His children. Yes, if Christ, while upon earth, was always heard (John 11:41-42), much more will He, now being in heaven, receive everything at His request.

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